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DISASTER REDUCTION AND RELIEF

Implementation of the international strategy for the fight against locust and grasshopper infestation, particularly in Africa

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the Economic and Social Council the report of the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on the implementation of the international strategy for the fight against locust and grasshopper infestation, particularly in Africa, prepared in accordance with Council resolution 1990/62, paragraph 6.

Annex

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST LOCUST AND GRASSHOPPER INFESTATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA

Report of the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

SUMMARY

The overall locust situation remained relatively calm in the second half of 1990 and early 1991 with no substantial populations of desert locust, African migratory locust, red locust or brown locust reported. Grasshopper infestations in West Africa were not as severe as in 1989 due mainly to the reduced rainfall, although approximately 1.3 million hectares still required control.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has continued in its coordinating role and provided regular bulletins on the desert locust situation. The FAO Emergency Centre for Locust Operations (ECLO) was closed in December 1990 due to the desert locust recession and the reduced scale of grasshopper infestations. However, FAO responsibilities in the field of locust and grasshopper coordination continue through its regular programme activities. Further progress has been made in research, both fundamental and operational, particularly in impact research, and also in training. Additional proposals for research, training and operations are being developed.

Review of the locust and grasshopper situation

Desert locusts

1. In the second half of 1990 and early 1991 generally only small populations of desert locusts were present in Africa. However, in late 1990, a small infestation was present in southern Tunisia, together with other grasshopper species. A small-scale control campaign was undertaken. In general, environmental conditions have not been conducive to breeding and multiplication throughout most of the recession area since early 1990, and in many areas drought conditions have persisted. In the Near East a moderate infestation was largely controlled in Oman in mid-1990. Small-scale control was also undertaken in India and Pakistan in late 1990.

2. In general the situation in early 1991 was very calm, with only isolated swarms of desert locusts reported.

Other locusts

3. Populations of red, brown and African migratory locusts continued to be present at low levels in Africa. No significant populations requiring control were reported.

Moroccan locusts

4. There were again reports of infestations of Moroccan locusts in 1990 from north-western Afghanistan. Limited control operations were undertaken in 1990 and a further, more extensive, campaign is planned for 1991, financed through the Office of the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes relating to Afghanistan (UNOCA), with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. A small infestation was also controlled in Morocco during 1990.

Grasshoppers

5. Substantial infestations of a number of species of grasshoppers were present in many of the Sahelian countries of West Africa during 1990. Due to the reduced rainfall in parts of the Sahel in 1990, the populations were not as extensive as predicted. Nevertheless, ground and aerial control campaigns were necessary and a total of approximately 1.5 million hectares were treated (see appendix). Heavy localized damage to millet and sorghum was reported in several countries. Similar infestations can be expected in 1991 if the summer rains approach their long-term average.

International cooperation

6. As the lead agency within the United Nations system for locust control, FAO continued its coordinating role during 1990/91. FAO continued to provide regular monthly summaries of the desert locust situation and provided assistance to the Joint Anti-Locust and Anti-Aviarian Organization (OCLALAV) for regular grasshopper bulletins in 1990. The FAO Emergency Centre for Locust Operation (ECLO) was closed in December 1990 due to the continued recession of desert locusts and the reduced scale of grasshopper infestations in Africa. However, FAO responsibilities in this area continue through its regular programme activities. Donor assistance for locust and grasshopper activities continued in 1990, although at reduced levels reflecting the decline in the desert locust and grasshopper infestations. The total amount of donor assistance for locust and grasshopper activities since 1985 is now estimated at approximately $US 300 million.

Remote sensing and meteorology

7. The results of field research on remote sensing to improve locust monitoring conducted in the Niger in 1989 are expected to be published shortly. Further studies of this type are planned for other important locust habitats. Progress was also made in the preparation of an atlas of desert locust habitats. In addition, a study of the desert locust based on remote sensing in Mauritania was also published in 1991.

8. In the area of meteorology, there was further cooperation with the Office National de la Météorologie in Algeria in relation to migration studies.

9. In terms of both meteorology and remote sensing, further improvements in the quality and timeliness of data received by the Locusts, Migratory Pests and Emergency Operations Group at FAO (Rome) were made, including digital enhancement of images.

Training

10. Training activities continued in 1990/91. Training ranged from brigade level to regional training courses on migrant pests and specialized workshops on safe and efficient pesticide application. Regional training courses for locust control are planned for South-West Asia, the Near East and Africa, in addition to other training activities.

Research

11. Progress continues in research to develop new approaches to locust and grasshopper control, in particular, approaches that are more environmentally sound and may contribute to sustainable agricultural development.

12. The joint FAO/UNDP Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), established to advise UNDP on appraisal of project proposals aimed at developing alternative methods of locust control, held a meeting in September 1990. It recommended funding for a number of proposals in the fields of forecasting, meteorology, genetics and semiochemicals. The meeting of SAC planned for February 1991 was postponed until October 1991, when further proposals will be considered.

13. The Desert Locust Research and Development Register has been further revised. The third edition is to be published in May 1991.

14. The pesticide testing and vetting scheme, under which FAO provides advice on trials of new pesticides, has also continued. An independent panel met in 1990 and reviewed a large number of trials. The report of the panel is expected to be published in the near future. One of the purposes of the panel is to identify effective pesticides and determine the dosages at which they should be applied.

15. FAO has continued to support research in several areas in collaboration with appropriate organizations and institutes in the centres concerned. Such research has included the following:

(a) An environmental impact study. The results of a pilot project in Senegal were published in early 1991. A three-year follow-up study, carried out by FAO with donor funding, has commenced;

(b) Pesticide trials. Assistance was provided for trials in Mali in 1990 to test an insect growth regulator (IGR) that is non-toxic to the environment. Further collaboration in testing of IGRs is anticipated in 1991. Technical assistance was also provided for trials in the Niger;

(c) Desert locust development model. It is anticipated that FAO, through donor funding, will develop a simulation model for predicting swarm migration. It is expected that this model will be developed by late 1991;

(d) Spray application. FAO assisted in research to investigate safer and more efficient methods of pesticide application and in the evaluation of spraying equipment in collaboration with the Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCOEA).

16. In addition to the above-mentioned research, donors, both individually and collectively, continue to undertake research on various aspects of desert locusts and grasshoppers. Several meetings have been held where research results were presented and discussed. Others are planned for 1991. Specific research programmes will include the joint multi-donor programme on the development of biopesticides and individual donor programmes on crop-loss assessment.

Resources

17. In view of the continued recession of the desert locust and the reduced scale of grasshopper infestations in Africa no pledging or technical/planning meetings were held by FAO in 1990. With the closure of ECLO in December 1990, requests for additional assistance, particularly for grasshopper control, are now largely being directed through national steering committees in the affected countries.

18. With regard to the desert locust, a technical meeting to discuss an interregional project proposal for the Preventive Control of Desert Locust in West and North-West Africa is planned in May 1991. This project aims to develop and substantially strengthen the surveillance capabilities in the affected countries of the two regions.

19. The disposal of obsolete pesticide stocks remains a major issue. Further information gathered indicates that this is a major problem. It is anticipated that FAO will develop proposals for pilot projects to address this issue in 1991. Technical guidelines will also be issued shortly on the disposal of bulk quantities of pesticides.

Conclusion

20. The Director-General wishes to take this opportunity to express once again his appreciation to all donors that have contributed resources to the locust and grasshopper campaign. The need to develop alternative control strategies that are less dependent on chemical pesticides is receiving increased attention in research and development efforts in both the affected and the industrialized countries. The Director-General wishes to give assurance that FAO will continue to support such initiatives and efforts to assist and improve current strategies.

Appendix

SUMMARY OF GRASSHOPPER INFESTATIONS AND AREAS TREATED IN WEST AFRICA DURING 1990

(Hectares)

Country	Area infested	Area treated		
		Ground	Air	Total
Benin	No reports			No reports
Burkina Faso	..	56 000	--	56 000
Cameroon	7 000	500	--	500
Chad a/	200 000	192 200	--	192 200
Côte d'Ivoire	No reports			No reports
Guinea	17 100	..	..	..
Guinea-Bissau	No reports			No reports
Mali a/	600 000	351 400	107 700	459 100
Mauritania a/	500 000	50 100	100 500	150 600
Niger	566 000	296 000	139 600	435 600
Nigeria	..	..	..	..
Senegal	..	225 000	21 100	246 100
Total	1 890 100	1 171 200	368 900	1 540 100

a/ Estimated area infested.